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Topographies of Class. Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin, by Sabine Hake. University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2008 (Book Review)

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on page 143 begins with an observation that animals contribute to the development of children. A list of such instances from several novels follows, and then the section just breaks off. Kreuzer neither reflects analytically on the relevance to the section's overall theme of «Katalysatoren der kinderliterarischen Figuren» nor investigates any further the insights from empirical or theoretical research on such «catalysts» in childhood development, such as pets. Numerous awkward transitions between paragraphs and the persistent recourse to paraphrasing without critical examination indicate a promising idea for a monograph that emerged prematurely.

One finds here neither the incisive scholarly interpretations of contemporary German children's fiction exemplified in Gundel Mattenklott's *Zauberkreide* (1989) nor the erudite polemics of the numerous essays by Hans-Heino Ewers of the past two decades. To be fair, Kreuzer's book does not appear to be intended for literary scholars, but more likely for grade-school teachers who would use recent children's literature in their classes. After all, he is writing from his perspective as a *Diplom-Pädagoge*. Even so, the lack of a well-structured theoretical base diminishes the book's analytical integrity. Despite objections, *König Kind?* should interest teachers or future teachers who might read such realistic novels with their students, or university students beginning a study of *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*. The table in the appendix provides a useful quick overview of the thematic family relations featured in the realistic novels under discussion; the bibliography includes an appropriate list of secondary literature, despite some glaring omissions, such as the recent series of studies on reading didactics edited by Norbert Groeben und Bettina Hurrelmann. So much has been published recently on fantasy literature for children, at least in part due to the phenomenal popularity in Germany of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels, that Kreuzer's emphasis on realism offers a timely contrasting parallel, even with the shortcomings of this book.

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SABINE HAKE: *Topographies of Class. Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2008. 323 pp. \$ 85.00.

Taking its inspiration from the «spatial turn» in cultural studies, this monograph focuses on the interplay between architecture, modernity, and mass society in Weimar Berlin. Drawing on a rich interdisciplinary inventory of literary, philosophical, photographic, and filmic texts to reconstruct Berlin's urban realities and imaginaries, the author subdivides her investigations into the following seven thematic chapters. Chapter 1 «Setting the Scene: Weimar Berlin, circa 1920» gives an overview of the city's development from the Wilhelmine to the Weimar years, telescoping its urban planning through Martin Wagner's bold proposals for modern traffic squares and exemplifying it in the case study of Potsdamer Platz. Chapter 2 «Mapping Weimar Society: On Masses, Classes, and White-Collar Workers» and chapter 3 «Organizing the Modern Masses: New Building in Weimar Berlin» examine the rise of a white-collar class and its culture of «New Objectivity» and exemplify it through Erich Mendel-

sohn's «functionalist aesthetics» and Ludwig Hilberseimer's urban vision of a high-rise city. Chapter 4 «Walking in the Metropolis: The City Texts of Franz Hessel and Siegfried Kracauer» explores the city with a special focus on the Kurfürstendamm and further traces its multiple significations in the urban flanerics and hieroglyphics of Hessel and Kracauer, two of the most astute explorers and interpreters of modern cityscapes at that time. Chapter 5 «Picturing the New Berlin: Photography, Architecture, and Modern Mass Society» illustrates the connection between photography and architecture in the photographic works of Sasha Stone, Mario von Bucovich, and Laszlo Willinger and exemplifies it in the case study of the Mossehaus. Chapter 6 «Deconstructing Modern Subjectivity: On *Berlin Alexanderplatz*» and chapter 7 «Reconstructing Modern Subjectivity: On *Berlin, Symphony of the Big City*» highlight the dramatic changes and spectacular synergies of the Weimar metropolis in the novel by Alfred Döblin and the film by Walter Ruttmann, the two arguably most exemplary works of art representing and reflecting the Berlin of the Weimar Republic.

Without exception, all chapters unfold as a rich tapestry of texts and theories exploring and interpreting the modern maze of urban realities and utopian imaginaries. Their dense narratives, always closely correlating description with abstraction, shed light on a wide variety of themes and leitmotifs, such as massification, proletarianization and «Proletkult» (114), the containing and unleashing of crowds, social engineering, mechanization, Fordism, Taylorism, standardization and commodification, labor and leisure, the competing ideologies of Bolshevism and Americanization, Bauhaus, Neues Bauen and «Lichtarchitektur,» New Man and New Woman, life reform movement, garden city movement and de-urbanization, traffic as the central trope of the modern city, as well as aspects of allegorization, urban consciousness, the feminization of modern mass culture and its messianic mystique, architecture as a metropolitan «Gesamtkunstwerk,» and the «transcendental beauty of glass and steel» (113). Given the abundance of city stimulations, including the rising surface culture, commodity fetishism, photo journalism, the cinematic characteristics of the metropolis, and the spectacularization of its modern technologies, it is not surprising that the city's most perceptive flaneurs like Hessel, Kracauer, and Walter Benjamin experience a kind of «Straßenrausch» (157) which in turn inspires their spirited descriptions of Weimar Berlin. Throughout this study, the hermeneutic principles of Benjamin's «optical unconscious» and Edward Soja's «socio-spatial dialectics» permeate and illuminate the multi-layered, multi-perspectival, and multi-voiced manifestations of the modern metropolis as well as their competing iconographies of the city as organism and machine.

What is somewhat striking, given the tightly woven tapestries of the various chapters, is the fact that several thematic strands are not fully developed. As a first example one could quote the phenomenon of «absorption of the individual into a collective body, a process accompanied by experiences of regression, incorporation, and ecstatic surrender» (90). A reference to the party rallies of the Third Reich, culminating in the collective scream and delirious demand for total war could have helped to flesh out the pathological psychodynamics of such massification. A second example of suggestive ends not pursued might be the proliferation of the concept of «cult» such as «cult of movement,» «cult of flanerics,» «cult of distraction,» etc. One could

reasonably make the case that these «cults» coalesce into a kind of surrogate religion, compensating for the «transcendental homelessness» which Georg Lukács had famously identified as the spiritual condition of modern man. When Bruno Taut, one of the leading theorists of urban utopias, wrote of the «cosmic character of architecture» (100), he pointed into that same elusive direction of a home lost and found. The other side of this utopian trajectory is not surprisingly the dystopian reality of modern mass housing. Its disastrous potential becomes most evident in Ludwig Hilberseimer's proposal for a high-rise city which in his later exile he would denounce as a «necropolis» (131). Again, drawing parallels for example to post-World War II housing projects in New York City could have further corroborated his horror vision. By systematic extension, repeated references to cities comparable to Weimar Berlin, such as Paris, London, and New York, could have served to further accentuate the commonalities and differences in the evolution of modern megacities.

Most strikingly, the architecture of glass and light which in Weimar city planning symbolized community and spirituality literally exploded in post-unification Berlin into a multitude of glass constructions ranging from Helmut Jahn's translucent tent at Potsdamer Platz and the glass addition to the German Historical Museum by I.M. Pei, the celebrated «Magician of Light,» to Sir Norman Foster's crystal cupola on the Reichstag and the gigantic glass palace of Berlin's new central train station, to name but a few. Including these recent architectural constructions could have helped to crystallize the architectural reality of unified Berlin as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy of Weimar's urban imaginary. Last but not least, Berlin's dialectics of utopian construction, apocalyptic deconstruction, and contemporary reconstruction as well as the artistic concepts of montage, citation, and collage, which inform and inspire especially Döblin's and Ruttmann's works of art, clearly substantiate Weimar's architectural concept of «tabula rasa» and anticipate postmodern aesthetics, whose conceptual strategies could have easily been teased out in the study's concluding summation. On the other hand, tying these various loose ends cohesively together into comprehensive conclusions might already be the proposal for a new and explicitly comparative and transnational study of the (post)modern metropolis and its international (post)metropolitan future.

Accompanying the various chapters are circa sixty visual samples including drawings, photos, and magazine covers as well as an apparatus of extensive endnotes which cite and reference the rich body of secondary literature and pertinent theories. The study concludes with three indices of names, places, and titles, thus rounding out a well written, thoroughly researched, and all in all very convincingly argued exposition of one of the most complex and fascinating cultural periods in German history. Thus, *Topographies of Class* can stand as an illustrative model for the «spatial turn» in cultural studies and be highly recommended for students and scholars in a wide variety of disciplines.